

58 THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE PHILIPPINES

early Filipinos were literate, but the church missionaries in their mistaken zeal ruthlessly destroyed practically every vestige of their writings. One Spanish priest in Southern Luzon boasted that he had destroyed more than three hundred scrolls written in native characters. As a result only a few fragments of Filipino literature survive, to the vexation of modern scholars. Accordingly, it has been necessary to search the records of neighboring countries for the history of the Philippines before the arrival of Magellan. The isolated facts thus disclosed have then had to be carefully tested for authenticity and pieced together to make a connected narrative.

Of the antiquity of the Philippines no one can speak with authority. Yet though the historical datum is not what it might be, there is reason to believe that the Philippines had been part of two far-flung Malayan empires, Shri-Vishaya, whose center was Sumatra, and Madjapahit with Java as the seat, and of a Chinese empire which had ruled the Philippines and exacted tribute from its inhabitants. However, this view is hotly contested by respectable authors. The Indian influence was then most profound, while the Chinese influence was only felt through the channels of trade. From the voluminous Chinese chronicles we learn that the Chinese had had commercial relations with the Philippines for a thousand years before the Christian era. In 1372 A. D. the first embassy from the Philippines arrived in China with tribute. In suc-

ceeding years this seems to have been the practice. In addition, there was trade with Japan, the Moluccas, Siam, Cambodia, and Borneo.

When the Spaniards arrived they found the Filipinos numbering about half a million and scattered all over the Islands in groups called "barangays," which were ruled by petty chiefs. Sometimes the "barangays" were united in loose confederations. In Manila, the chieftain Rajah Soliman had his